SHWEDAGONE PAGODA

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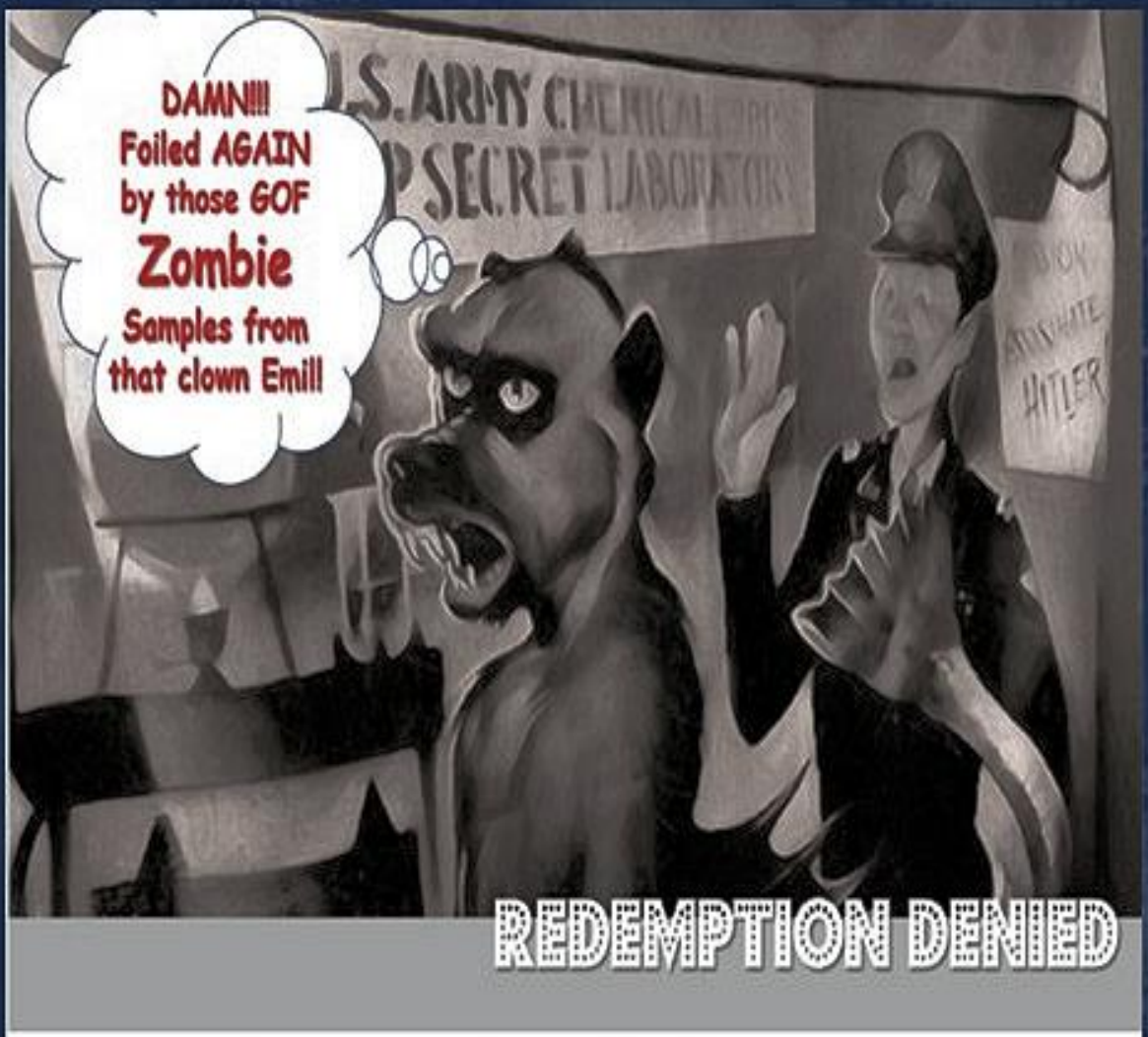

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Colonel Churchward, a seasoned veteran of the Himalayan Foothills campaigns and Afghan deserts, gracefully settled into his chair, commanding attention from the attentive waitress who catered to his every need with the utmost care. Without the formality expected of a man of his esteemed stature in high society, he delved into a captivating narrative of his latest business endeavor in the distant lands of the English Empire, known to us as Rangoon.
It was quite evident that this marked his inaugural voyage to the destination, as his

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enthusiasm resonated in his words when describing the attractions and, notably, the inhabitants whom he regarded as a superior class compared to the Indians and Muslims of India. As a subordinate to the esteemed Colonel, I, being significantly younger, could not afford to disregard his words if I ever aspired to elevate my standing within the Raj. Therefore, I attentively listened to every anecdote he shared, even going as far as to humbly request for more tales of his thrilling adventures while graciously offering him a drink.

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The Colonel regaled us with tales of a magnificent temple nestled within the British Administration in the exotic Burma Colony, boasting that it surpassed all other pagodas in the world in terms of sheer beauty and grandeur.
He elucidated that the Burmese designate their temples as pagodas, akin to the practice in China. He pledged on his regiment standard that this was conceivably the most exquisite of all the temples in Burma. He conveyed that the indigenous people recognize it as the illustrious Shwedagone Pagoda.

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"Shwe translates to the color of opulence in the elegant Burmese language," he remarked, embellishing his description of a magnificent, bell-shaped pyramid.

His captivating words drew me back in as he revealed that the Pagoda stands tall at 370 feet above the majestic mound it rests upon, adorned entirely in shimmering gold. I couldn't help but marvel at the sheer opulence of it all, prompting me to ask in genuine wonder: "And no one dares to lay a finger on it?"

As a former Army Engineer, his attention was captivated by the

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intricate details of the mound, noting its impressive height and the apparent hand of man in its construction.

As my thoughts lingered on a majestic 370-foot-tall tower crafted from pure gold, he effortlessly captivated the growing audience with tales of how the earth was transported to create a stronghold and a grand base for the shrine. He openly pondered the logistical and labor requirements, drawing parallels to the impressive earthworks he had witnessed in Egypt during his early military days.

It was not until I conducted

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further investigation that I truly realized, much to my eternal dismay, that the pagoda was actually made of solid brick and merely adorned with a delicate layer of gold leaf. However, I did come across information stating that the pagoda housed some invaluable and sacred relics.

My intellectual capacity has always been insufficient to grasp the concept of a sacred relic being deemed invaluable yet unsellable due to its renowned status as an irreplaceable treasure.

In the years to come, I have established myself as a

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renowned authority on this temple, having been selected as the Colonel's Attaché and chauffeur. I have listened to him recount his Burma Adventure countless times in the canteen messes, and stood by his side during night watch along the frontier border, actively participating in the interception of border smugglers along the Nepalese Frontier.

On a chilly and luminous evening, we found ourselves gazing in silence at the moon ascending above the faraway mountain peaks. It was then that he decided to enlighten the

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young officers on his profound admiration for the Shwedagone Pagoda and the marvel of its intricate construction.
The elderly Colonel Churchward failed to grasp that the temple had initially been much smaller in size. It was through the efforts of numerous generations of kings, who continuously added layers of brickwork over time, that the structure gradually expanded into the magnificent edifice he was privileged to witness and explore.
In his discerning gaze and critical assessment, the magnificent Shwedagone Pagoda, which now looms grand and exquisite, is, in

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truth, a deception.
It did not arise from a singular endeavor, but rather evolved over countless centuries of meticulous craftsmanship.
I lacked the fortitude and the audacity to challenge the esteemed Colonel with a harsh truth, especially not in his presence, that this sanctuary could not be deemed as one of the authentic marvels of the world.
I held a fondness for the elderly gentleman, yet fervently wished he had never ventured to Burma.

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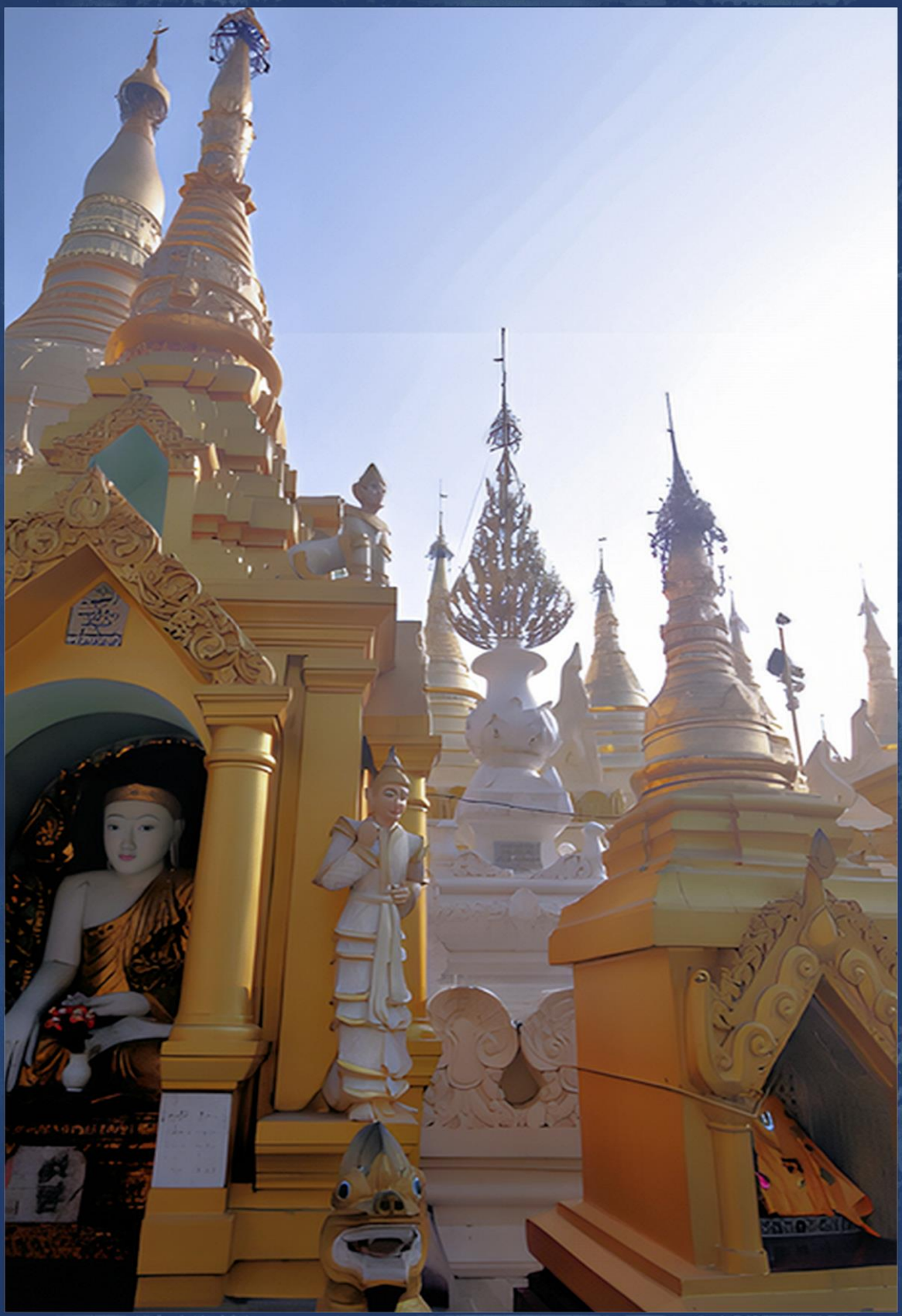

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ABANDONED RUINS OVERGROWN WITH WEEDS 2

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"PICKING UP EVERY STITCH"

«MO'OL AMAL PUNTADA»

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"FLOWERED DEATH HIDDEN IN THE MIST"

«KÍIMILI' FLORIDA ESCONDIDA TI' LE NIEBLA»

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